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A Message
from
Cardinal Mercier

Reprinted from
EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE
APRIL, 1917

DÉSIRÉ-JOSEPH, CARDINAL MERCIER,
ARCHBISHOP OF MALINES, PRIMATE OF BELGIUM

CARDINAL MERCIER, Archbishop of Malines, was acclaimed "the greatest hero of the war" by a vast gathering of eminent Americans of all faiths and professions assembled last January in Carnegie Hall, New York, to protest against the German deportations of Belgian workmen.

Certainly his heroism in risking life and liberty by lifting up his voice against the oppression of his flock, has made his name an honor to Belgium, and an honor to Christianity throughout the world.

The illustrious Belgian prelate was even before the war a most prominent figure. Eleven years ago, Mercier was a professor at the University of Louvain. His science and talent were so highly appreciated, not only in Belgium but also in Rome, that when Cardinal Goossens, Archbishop of Malines, died, the Pope called on Professor Mercier to become the Belgian archbishop's successor. This is perhaps without precedent, the archbishop being usually chosen from among the bishops. A year later he was created cardinal.

It is a little-known fact that, as the Archbishop of Malines, he enjoys the right of precedence over all other archbishops of his faith.

After the death of Pius X. in August, 1914, notwithstanding the old tradition that an Italian prelate should be elected Pope, and the fact that Belgium, already invaded by Germany, had been forced into war, several votes were cast in the Conclave for Cardinal Mercier.

It is said that if the war had not occurred, the Conclave, breaking with a centuries-old tradition, would have been inclined to elect the Belgian cardinal as the head of the Catholic Church.

A year before the war, Cardinal Mercier, long since a prominent member of the Belgian Royal Academy of Science, Letters, and Fine Arts, was unanimously elected by



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his colleagues, of all denominations, as president of this most distinguished body.

Since the invasion of Belgium and the occupation of the greater part of the country, Cardinal Mercier has commanded the admiration of the world for his patriotism, dignity, and his splendid devotion to his fellow countrymen in their suffering.



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A MESSAGE FROM CARDINAL MERCIER

Cardinal Mercier is now practically a prisoner in Belgium. War conditions have made it difficult for him to express to the world, except through official Church channels, his views and feelings about the violation of Belgium. Never since the beginning of the war has he written for any magazine. EVERYBODY'S feels deeply gratified at having succeeded in overcoming the many difficulties in the way of reaching the illustrious prelate to secure the following message to the American people.

Malines, January 23, 1917.

To the Editor of EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE:

You have very kindly expressed the desire to receive from Belgium a page of psychology and history, which will inform you in regard to the state of the soul of the Belgian nation, under pressure of events of the present hour.

I shall not conceal from you that for an instant I hesitated to respond to your request, because I feared that I might seem to deviate from the line of conduct that I have laid down for myself since the commencement of the war. As a shepherd of souls, I wish only to serve the moral and religious interests of my people. I should not wish that my contribution to a review, even though it be EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE, should be interpreted by either our enemies or our friends as an intrusion into that domain which, in certain circles, is disdainfully called the "Domain of Politics."

But the objects of the present war and the many conflicts connected with it, into which religious conscience has been drawn, are outside the domain of politics.

Three times during the last two and a half years, we have endeavored to make the voice of the Belgian Episcopate heard outside our frontiers. The first time, to protest against the sacrilegious violation of our territory and to affirm the right of existence of small nations; the second time, to protest against the calumny which attempted to transform into culprits the victims of massacres perpetrated by the German armies in Belgium, and also at this second time to endeavor to obtain recognition, before an international tribunal, of the upright conduct of the Belgian people and the justice of their cause; finally, a third time, we appealed to public opinion in order to prevent the entire male population of our country and of northern France from being carried away, like a band of slaves, into the country of the enemy and there compelled to employ arms against their own country.

The mass meeting held at Carnegie Hall, New York, December fifteenth—a magnificent assembly of the intellectual, social, and religious élite of the American nation—has shown to the world that our thought has been fully comprehended.

With what pride and what comfort we have heard your speakers proclaim that international law, as codified in the Hague Convention—especially Article 46, "respect for the rights of the family"; Article 52, which forbids the occupant to subject the inhabitants of an occupied country to requisitions which are not "required by the needs of the army of occupation"; Articles 50 and 52, finally, of which the first permits the employment,



Drawn by F. Luis Mora

A MESSAGE FROM CARDINAL MERCIER

even of prisoners of war, only on works "which have no connection with the operations of the war," and of which the second stipulates that "the services required of the inhabitants for the needs of the army of occupation shall not impose upon the population the obligation to take part in operations of war against their own country"—with what pride and comfort, I say, we have heard your speakers proclaim that this codified international law is the fruit of the collective work of civilized nations during many generations; hence, it is the common patrimony of these various civilized and civilizing nations, and, therefore, to destroy international law and the general interests of civilization, is to pillage and destroy the heritage of the United States!

If there is a people in the world whose rôle it is to safeguard the liberty of labor, is it not that nation which, half a century ago, placed the crown of glory upon Lincoln, and which is the result of a civil war for the abolition of slavery?

But if I might venture to formulate a suggestion, it would be the following: For two years we have been lost in admiration of the phalanxes of disinterested citizens who spontaneously, leaving their occupations, their firesides, their soil, have come, one after another, under the high patronage of the United States, of Spain, and of Holland, to supervise the generous contributions of food and clothing which our sister nations have sent for the relief of our distress. If England and France are willing to consent to this relief of Belgium, it is because of their faith in your supervision. Why should you not offer to the German empire this same service in the domain of morals and of international law?

Why, since it is a question of protecting a patrimony which belongs to you in common with other civilized nations, why should you not, in concert with other neutral states, impose upon the power which temporarily occupies Belgium and northern France, your right of supervision?

France and Belgium would have their representatives who, under the presidency of the delegate of a neutral power, would form, with the representatives of Germany, an international tribunal. This tribunal would examine into the occupation or profession of the deported men, or at least of a certain number of them; it would make a preliminary classification between manual laborers and civilians belonging to other professions; it would ascertain whether the workmen were employed or unemployed at the time of their deportation; whether or not they were maintained by public charity; whether they subscribed voluntarily or under constraint to their deportation and their labor contract; this tribunal would ascertain the causes of unemployment; and, finally, it would inquire into the treatment to which the deported men, here as well as in Germany, have been subjected.

For some days, a certain number of workmen have been coming back from Germany, worn out, thin, ill, declaring unanimously that they have suffered from hunger and from cold; many have added that they have been insulted, beaten, flogged because they refused to work or to declare themselves voluntary workers. But at the same time that these deported men, who have no doubt become more of an incumbrance than a help, have been sent back to their firesides, the deportations have been renewed in other parts of the country. As I write these lines, levies are being made in Brussels and in ten of the contiguous communes.

EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE is a powerful influence. In placing it at the service of the Belgian people, you place it, sir, at the service of the Freedom of Labor and of the Family.

Belgium once more will bless the great and noble American nation, which has added a new and glorious page to the history of civilization.

(Signed) D. J. Card. Mercier, Arch. de Malines.

Le "Everybody's Magazine" est une puissance. En la mettant au service du peuple belge, vous la mettez, Monsieur le Directeur, au service de la liberté du travail, et de la famille; la Belgique en bénéficiera la grande et noble nation Américaine qui aura ajouté une nouvelle et glorieuse page à l'histoire de la civilisation.

J. D. J. van D. Mercier, Cardinal de Malines.

A PLEA FOR BELGIUM

THE grateful homage to the American nation for the moral and material support already given to unfortunate Belgium expressed in the preceding message was written by Cardinal Mercier on January twenty-third, just before the diplomatic break between the United States and Germany.

The plight of Belgium is now much more serious, and the suffering of the Belgian people is increasing every day. An American relief-agent has written in his report:

"I have seen thousands of people lined up in the snow or rain, soaked and chilled, waiting for bread and soup. I have returned to the distributing stations at the end of the day and have found men, women, and sometimes children, still standing in line, but later compelled to go back to their homes, cold, weak, and miserable."

Among the destitute there are more than a million *children* who are dependent upon food supplied by charity. The suffering of hundreds of thousands of women is no less appalling. Innumerable appeals for aid reach Cardinal Mercier every day. He personally visits the poor and destitute. Very recently the Cardinal said:

"I have seen hundreds of my flock in peril and tears. During three days, from morn to eve, I went about the regions whence the foremost workmen and artisans were taken by force into exile. I entered more than a hundred half-empty homes. Husbands were absent; children were orphans; sisters, sad-eyed, and with inert arms, sat beside their sewing-machines. A gloomy silence reigned in these cottages. It was as though there were a corpse in the house."

Cardinal Mercier endeavors to relieve the untold misery throughout all the country. But he can not aid these unfortunates, on the verge of starvation, without *our* generous financial support. We therefore earnestly appeal to our readers and to all the American public, for contributions to this most worthy cause. Your contribution will be used especially for the relief of women and children—of orphans; the most pitiable victims of the war.

Your donation will be a token of your sympathy for the illustrious prelate who has won the admiration of the whole world, regardless of nationality or creed.

All donations will be acknowledged in EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE, and the entire amount will be forwarded by us to Cardinal Mercier, without any deduction for expenses.

Make checks payable to: "Cardinal Mercier Subscription," and mail them to EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York City.

Everybody's Magazine

This uncensored communication from Cardinal Mercier appeared exclusively in *Everybody's* for March. Its importance and timeliness is representative of the character of the leading articles in *Everybody's* each month.

In January there was an interview with Lloyd George, in February a message from President Wilson, in March a study of Leonard Wood, in April a message from Cardinal Mercier, in May a first-hand report of the progress of the revolution in Russia.

More articles of like significance will follow, and America's part in the world war will be closely covered by *Everybody's* own representatives in Europe, including Isaac F. Marcossou and William G. Shepherd.

In the field of fiction, *Everybody's* offering for 1917 is no less notable. Among the list of contributors for the year appear such names as those of

ERNEST POOLE
MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
IAN HAY
LINCOLN STEFFENS
MRS. JACQUES FUTRELLE
EDWIN LEFEVRE
ZONA GALE
OLIVE HIGGINS PROUTY

The work of these writers, and many others as yet unannounced, together with regular department features, illustrations, and news articles, make up a well-balanced magazine such as must appeal to American readers during this important year in their country's history.

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